

Victor and Etella Faith House  
Cambria City Neighborhood  
122-24 Chestnut Street  
Johnstown  
Cambria County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5748

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Victor and Etella Faith House

HABS No. PA-5748

Location: 122-24 Chestnut Street, Cambria City, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pa.

Description: No. 122-24 Chestnut Street is a multi-residential building facing southwest and occupying a triangular lot bounded by Roosevelt Boulevard, Chestnut Street, and Second Avenue. The structure is seven-sided, shaped somewhat like a parallelogram. The Chestnut Street frontage is 113', Roosevelt Boulevard 160', and Second Avenue 123'. The three-story building is wood-framed with a brick facade, and a mansard roof with nine dormers. The exterior walls are punctuated on every side with doors and with both square and rectangular two-light windows. Original storefront windows remained until the mid-1960s, when the entire building was extensively renovated. Overall, 122-24 Chestnut is one of the largest and most striking multi-residential buildings in Cambria City.

History: This building was constructed sometime between 1892 and 1895, probably in 1895. Peter Sirlouis, a teamster and former Burgess of Cambria Borough (1884) sold the lot to Etella (or Estella) Faith on October 1, 1892, for \$400. In 1895, 122-24 Chestnut housed a grocery, according to the Sanborn maps. In 1900, Victor E. Faith, a "Hungarian," Aetella [sic] Faith, their three sons and two daughters, Ladislav Faith (a brother), a servant, and at least six boarders occupied the premises, according to the census. Faith (spelled in tax assessment records as "Fite") worked as a saloonkeeper.

According to city directories and the United States census for 1910, Victor Faith had a varied business career. He also worked as a cigar merchant and rented apartments in a nearby building (322-24 Second Ave.) after 1900. In 1901, Faith opened the Hotel Victor on this property. In 1903, he started both a steamship agency here, and "Faith and Co. Distillers." In 1911, the distillery was known as Faith's "sweet mash distillery" at 219 Chestnut. In 1910, Emil Karchuak, a distillery salesman (perhaps at Faith's business), his wife Mary and their two children rented 124 Chestnut. Overall, Victor Faith was one of Cambria City's most visible residents. His steamship agency, a commonly-used business for sending money abroad, probably was utilized by the East Central Europeans of Cambria City (Morawska, 142).

Victor Faith conveyed the property to Andy Bellack on October 13, 1926, for \$6,000. The property has remained in the Bellack and Twardziak families since then.

Sources:

Deed and Tax Assessment Records, Cambria County Courthouse, Ebensburg, Pa.

Sanborn Map Company, Johnstown, Pennsylvania (New York, The Sanborn Map Co., 1895, 1911, 1913, 1949).

United States Census, Cambria County, Pennsylvania, City of Johnstown, Fifteenth Ward, 1900, 1910.

Johnstown City Directories, 1895, 1900, 1901, 1905.

Interview with Mrs. Kay Twardziak, June 18, 1988.

Morawska, Ewa, For Bread With Butter: The Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

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Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). An overview of history of the city (HABS No. PA-5669) and an overview of the neighborhoods of Cambria City and Minersville (HABS No. PA-5672) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the downtown and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Jeffrey Hickey in August 1988 under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, the supervisory historian of the project. Hickey's and other project historians' work was published as The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1989), edited by Kim E. Wallace. Illustrations in the publication include large format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe and 35 mm photographs taken by the project historians.